

be investing more in our domestic critical infrastructure and in our first responders.

Although we have taken steps to boost our homeland security since the attacks on September 11, our critical infrastructure remains largely exposed and our emergency first responders are spread too thin. Our port authorities have identified \$8.4 billion for meeting Federal security requirements; transit agencies have identified \$6 billion for making trains and buses safer for passengers; and firefighters have identified over \$4 billion for performing their critical duties safely and efficiently.

As the Senate considered this legislation, I was offered an amendment that increased resources to our Nation's firefighters by \$25 million above the bill's allocation of \$655 million. This amendment was cosponsored by colleagues, Senators DEWINE, MIKULSKI, and SNOWE, and was agreed to by unanimous consent.

I also offered an amendment that would have increased critical infrastructure security and first responder funding by \$16 billion to a total of \$20 billion. My amendment would have codified a recommendation made 3 years ago by a task force chaired by our former colleague, Warren Rudman, along with a distinguished panel of national security, intelligence, military and public health officials.

Regrettably, this measure—along with other measures I supported seeking to raise resources for critical infrastructure protection and first responders—were not adopted. Members who spoke in opposition to these amendments argued that we could not afford the extra cost. Ironically, many of the Members who opposed these amendments have supported permanent tax cuts for the most affluent of Americans—tax cuts that have been projected to cost \$1 trillion over the next 15 years. If we can afford to give such a generous tax break to the few thousand wealthiest Americans, then why can we not afford adequately to safeguard 281 million Americans from terrorist attacks at a mere fraction of that cost?

We are living in extraordinary times. Never before in our history has there been a prolonged period of time when the threat of harm to Americans on their own soil has been so high. While it has been almost 5 years since terrorists attacked the World Trade Center, the more recent attacks in Madrid, London, and Mumbai tell us that we must remain vigilant about our domestic security. They tell us that we must renew and redouble our efforts to prevent and respond to terrorism here at home.

On balance, I voted for this legislation because the funding it appropriates does take important steps towards meeting our domestic security needs. However, I look forward to working with my colleagues in the coming years to find and provide the necessary resources that can make our

Nation as safe and strong as it can possibly be.

FEMA

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, earlier this week, I voted with a bipartisan majority of Senators to strengthen FEMA while leaving it in the Department of Homeland Security. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the woeful response of the Federal Emergency Management Administration, I was prepared to remove FEMA from the Department of Homeland Security. At the time, it was clear that FEMA had been stripped of necessary resources and leadership, and that, as a result of these choices, it had failed the citizens of the gulf coast.

I changed my mind and voted to strengthen FEMA for three important reasons. First, the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee conducted extensive hearings and oversight into the problems that led to the catastrophe of Katrina and how to fix this systemic failure. They conducted a 7-month investigation, including 23 hearings, heard testimony from 85 witnesses, interviewed 325 individuals, and reviewed 838,000 documents. They obviously did their homework.

Second, as a result of this exhaustive research, they made substantive proposals to strengthen the role of FEMA within the Department of Homeland Security. These changes will provide new statutory protections to ensure that the Administrator had direct access to the President, that it restores authorities to work directly with State and local agencies, and that it strengthens regional authorities by creating teams to foster cooperation and joint training for local emergency managers and first responders.

The final, and most important, reason that I decided to vote to strengthen FEMA as a component of the Department of Homeland Security is because of the position of local law enforcement and first responders. The bottom line is that I have spent my career working with the Fraternal Order of Police, the National Sheriffs Association, the National Association of Police Organizations, the National Troopers Coalition, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Association of Fire Fighters, the Major Cities Chief, and local first responders. I strongly value the opinions of these individuals, and if they believe that this is the right approach to help them in their efforts to save lives, I am willing to give it a shot.

I hope that the changes voted for by the vast majority of Senators earlier this week will return FEMA to its vaunted status of the 1990s. The American people deserve no less.

RECENT ATTACKS ON ISRAEL

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to offer my full support of Israel's decision to defend

itself. I also commend U.N. Ambassador John Bolton for vetoing the U.N. Security Council resolution addressing the situation in the Middle East, because of its unbalanced approach to the situation.

Unfortunately, due to the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers by Hamas and the continued rocket attacks by Hamas and Hezbollah against Israeli towns and villages, the Israeli Government was forced to defend itself.

There is no doubt that the Governments of Syria, Lebanon, and Iran are responsible for these attacks. These Governments provide the military equipment, training, and financing for Hamas and Hezbollah to conduct their terror campaigns. Their continued support for these terrorist organizations has left the Israeli Government with no other option than to defend itself by pursuing terrorist safe havens in Gaza and southern Lebanon.

Israel continues to be one of America's closest allies, and in this period of terror against the Israeli people it is essential that we support Israel's decision to defend itself against these terrorist attacks. I ask that the world community join in solidarity with Israel as it takes necessary steps to provide security to its people and dismantle the terrorist infrastructure in the Palestinian areas and in southern Lebanon.

Israel was attacked for one reason—these terror organizations and some governments in the region believe Israel does not have a right to exist as a country, much less live peacefully as a country. The unprovoked missile launches against Israel civilians, suicide bombings of women and children, and the kidnapping and torture of Israeli soldiers is the result of Iran, Syria, and certain factions of the Lebanese Government's inaction towards these terrorist organizations in their country.

The cycle of violence can only end if these countries dismantle these terrorist groups by cutting off funding and prohibiting terrorist organizations from participating in their governments. Otherwise, Israel will be required to continue defending itself against terrorist strongholds, and innocent civilians will suffer greatly—all of this because certain extreme elements remain bent on destruction rather than reconciliation.

Israel is a sovereign country that deserves to live in peace. Israel deserves to live in peace, free from the attacks of those who prey upon its open and democratic society. Unfortunately, innocent civilians are ones who pay the price on both sides of the conflict. Yet, until Israel is able to live free of missile attacks, kidnappings, and suicide bombers the unfortunate reality is that suffering will continue.

Mr. President, I believe that the United States should and must support Israel's right to defend itself. I hope that my colleagues will join me in expressing their support for one of our closest allies.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I wish to express my outrage at the terrorist actions of Hezbollah that we have seen in recent days.

As my colleagues are aware, this terrorist group conducted raids across Israel's border, kidnapping two Israeli soldiers, and also killed eight other Israeli soldiers. The stability in the region has been significantly compromised because of these terrorist actions.

These attacks on the sovereign nation of Israel are reprehensible, they are unacceptable, and they are not going unanswered. Israel has said it will not negotiate with terror organizations, and has demanded the release of its soldiers.

The United States must stand by Israel as it defends itself against such cowardly attacks. Israel has not only the right, but the responsibility to defend its citizens.

And there is certainly no doubt that Syria and Iran support the terrorist actions of Hezbollah. In fact, the latest State Department report on terrorism identifies Iran and Syria as state sponsors of terrorism. We will continue to wage the global war on terror, to do our best to rid the world of terrorists and those who support them.

But when acts of terrorism are perpetrated against sovereign nations, the international community must recognize that such nations will protect themselves and their citizens, as it is their right to do.

I extend my sympathy to the families of the Israeli soldiers who have been killed in these attacks and pray for the safe return of those captured.

TRIGGER LOCKS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, safe storage and child access prevention laws are crucial steps in the effort to reduce the occurrence of accidental shootings and suicides involving guns. Such tragedies have claimed the lives of thousands of young people and destroyed thousands of families, even though many of these occurrences could have been prevented by commonsense legislation.

A study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that the application of responsible gun storage measures can significantly reduce the risk of unintentional shooting or suicide by minors using a gun. According to the study, when ammunition in the home is locked up, the risk of such injuries is reduced by 61 percent. Simply storing ammunition separately from the gun reduces such occurrences by more than 50 percent.

According to the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, teenagers and children are involved in more than 10,000 accidental shootings in which nearly 800 people die each year. Reducing the number of accidental shootings

involving children and teenagers requires that commonsense gun storage measures be adopted.

In 2005, Congress passed a law, which the President signed, requiring that all handguns sold by a dealer come with a child-safety lock. It was a clear bipartisan effort to protect the youth of this country from gun violence. Unfortunately, last month the House of Representatives adopted legislation to repeal effective enforcement of this requirement as part of its Science, State, Justice, Commerce, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. The Senate has not yet considered its version of the appropriations bill.

Sarah Brady, wife of Jim Brady, who was shot in the attempted assassination of President Reagan, responded to last month's vote by saying:

In a nation where gun violence takes such an enormous toll, this vote is disturbingly backwards. Every year more than 30,000 Americans are killed by guns, including more than 2,800 young people. Every day, we lose a classroom of children to gun violence. So many health advocates, law enforcement officials, and others have urged Americans to more safely secure and store guns. But in the millions of American homes where children and firearms are present, 40 percent had at least one unlocked firearm.

While the problems of youth suicide and accidental shooting clearly cannot be completely legislated away, trigger locks and other sensible gun safety measures can help limit access to firearms by children, and there can be no doubt that reducing access by our kids to firearms can save many lives.

REGULATING PAYROLL TAX DEPOSIT AGENTS

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I have previously introduced a bill to regulate payroll tax deposit agents. This bill will help to protect small businesses from payroll tax fraud and provide them with greater confidence when working with payroll service providers that are registered with the Internal Revenue Service and bonded or audited.

In the fall of 2003, small businessman Roger Cyr, the owner of the Lily Moon Cafe in Saco, ME, learned that he was the victim of payroll tax fraud and owed \$52,000 in back taxes. He was one of a number of small business owners in Maine who were forced to pay their payroll taxes twice after an unscrupulous payroll provider ran off with their tax deposits instead of making the required payments to the IRS.

Unfortunately, I know that this type of payroll fraud is not unique to Maine and has also occurred in Utah, Iowa, as well as elsewhere. When payroll tax fraud occurs, many small owners, mom-and-pop companies, and other businesses are forced to pay their payroll taxes twice. This additional and unexpected expense can drive many of these companies out of business.

These payroll fraud cases obscure the fact that most small businesses use payroll providers that are honest, meticulous, and trustworthy. The majority of payroll tax agents pay their clients' taxes accurately and on time, provide outstanding service, and help their clients with a range of complicated tax and accounting issues. In order to protect small business owners from the few dishonest payroll providers, and to protect the honest small payroll providers from the bad actors in their industry, I have introduced the payroll tax deposit agent's bill.

My bill contains a number of provisions designed to guard small business owners against fraud by increasing the IRS' oversight of the payroll service providers. The bill creates a separate section of the Internal Revenue Code that will govern the payroll industry, it defines the responsibilities of payroll tax deposit agents, and requires all agents to register with the IRS or be penalized. The bill requires payroll agents to inform their clients of the clients' continued liability for all payroll taxes and the clients' need to periodically verify that their taxes are paid in full. The bill penalizes payroll providers that collect but fail to make required payments by extending section 6672 penalties to all payroll tax agents.

These provisions also provide some reasonable flexibility to small payroll service providers. It gives payroll providers a choice between obtaining a surety bond or submitting to a third party audit that verifies if a payroll company's books are solid and well managed.

Many small payroll service providers prefer audit option, which confirms that the payroll agent is making their client's tax deposit completely and on time, over bonding—as surety bonds can be very difficult for many small businesses to obtain. Additionally, small payroll agents argue that a third party audit actually provides their clients more protection against fraud than bonding because the audit verifies the payroll agent's sound financial practices while a surety bond only provides a limited reimbursement in cases of wrongdoing.

Many of these payroll tax agent provisions were already approved by the Senate Finance Committee as part of the Good Government Act. The Good Government Act was approved by the Senate Finance Committee and passed the Senate by unanimous consent agreement in May of 2004. Unfortunately, the Good Governance Act never made it out of conference. Now, as I introduce this bill, I am hoping that we can help protect our small businesses by seeing that these necessary payroll protections become law.

I would like to encourage my colleagues to help protect our small businesses from devious payroll tax agents by increasing IRS oversight and protections as contained in this bill.